

Message Text

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PAGE 01 HERMOS 00325 011636Z

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SUBJECT: LAND REFORM IN SONORA AT ACCELERATED PACE

REF: HERMOSILLO 319

1. MEXICO'S FEDERAL AGRICULTURAL REFORM SECRETARIAT (SRA) HAS, IN EFFECT, MOVED TEMPORARILLY TO SONORA AND, UNDER PERSONAL DIRECTION OF SECRETARY BARRA GARCIA, IS RAPIDLY REACHING DECISIONS ON THE 900 PENDING CASES OF DEMANDS FOR TRANSFER OF LANDS UNDER MEXICAN CONSTITUTION AND LAND REFORM LAWS. PROCEDURE BEING FOLLOWED SINCE WORK BEGAN IN HERMOSILLO MONDAY OCTOBER 27 IS FOR A CLAIMANT TO ASK FOR APPOINTMENT TO MEET WITH ONE OF SEVERAL PANELS OF SRA EXPERTS AND TECHNICIANS. THE SECRETARY PERSONALLY FREQUENTLY SITS ON THE PANELS THE PANEL REVIEWS THE FILE ON EACH CLAIM WITH THE CLAIMANT. THE PANEL THEN MAKES A RECOMMENDATION TO THE STATE CONSULTATIVE BODY, WHICH CONSIDERS THE RECOMMENDATION AND MAKES ITS DECISION. THE CASES CONSIDERED BY THE CONSULTATIVE BODY ARE THEN FORWARDED TO MEXICO CITY FOR APPROVAL BY THE PRESIDENT. AFTER THE PRESIDENT MAKES THE FINAL DECISION BY SIGNING OR NOT SIGNING EACH EXPROPRIATION CASE, THEY WILL BE SENT TO THE OFFICIAL JOURNAL FOR PUBLICATION. ONCE PUBLISHED, THE TITLE TO THE LAND AFFECTED WILL BE TRANSFERRED TO THE CLAIMANT.

2. IN THE FIRST TWO DAYS OF THEIR WORK, SRA OFFICIALS WERE REPORTED TO HAVE HEARD AND REVIEWED 200 CASES. SPEAKING TO THE LOCAL PRESS
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PAGE 02 HERMOS 00325 011636Z

EVENING OF OCTOBER 28, SECRETARY BARRA GARCIA DECLARED THAT ALL THE

LATIFUNDI IN SONORA WILL BE BROKEN UP, AND THAT THE NEW LAND REFORM LAW DOES NOT PROTECT MASKED LAND OWNERSHIP SUCH AS BY PUTTING THE TITLE

IN THE NAME OF RELATIVES OR THIRD PARTIES, SO LONG AS ONE PARTY WORKS THE LAND AND OBTAINS THE BENEFITS THEREFROM. SOURCES IN THE SRA ARE CITED AS INDICATING THAT IN THE YAQUI AND MAYO VALLEY IN SOUTHERN SONORA,

AND IN THE CABORCA AND PITIQUITO AREAS OF THE STATE, THERE ARE NINETY THOUSAND HECTARES THAT WILL BE TRANSFERRED TO CAMPESINO CLAIMANTS THROUGH SOME 70 PRESIDENTIAL RESOLUTIONS EXPECTED TO BE SIGNED IMMINENTLY. THIS REPRESENTS ONE-FOURTH OF THE PRIVATELY HELD IRRIGABLE LAND IN SONORA. FIRST AMONG THESE LANDS IS THE FARM AT SAN IGNACIO DE RIO MUERTO, WHERE SEVEN PERSONS WERE KILLED AND FIFTEEN WOUNDED ON OCTOBER 23. IT IS "UNOFFICIALLY" REPORTED THAT PRESIDENT ECHEVERRIA MAY PERSONALLY COME TO SAN IGNACIO DE RIO MUERTO AS EARLY AS NEXT WEEK TO PRESENT THEIR PROPERTY TITLES TO THE NEW OWNERS, THE PRESS REPORTS.

3. ALONG WITH THE REVIEW OF THE PENDING CLAIMS, THE SRA IS REVIEWING THE AVAILABILITY OF FEDERAL LANDS IN SONORA, TO MEET DEMANDS FOR LAND OWNERSHIP. THE SUBSECRETARY OF NEW POPULATION CENTERS IN THE

SRA, DR. MARTHA CHAVEZ PADRON, HAS BEEN QUOTED AS STATING THAT THERE ARE NEARLY 900,000 HECTARES OF SUCH LANDS THAT WILL BE TURNED OVER TO EJIDO CLAIMANTS. THESE LANDS ARE IN THE MUNICIPALITIES OF PUERTO PENASCO, NACOSARI, PITIQUITO, ARIZPE, URES, DIVISADEROS, TRINCHERAS, CUCURPE, AND OPODEPE. SHE STATED THAT THESE LANDS WOULD BE ALLOCATED TO CLAIMANTS ON THE BASIS OF 10 HECTARES OF IRRIGABLE LAND, 20 OF DRY FARMING LAND, OR ENOUGH RANGE LAND TO RUN 50 HEAD OF CATTLE. THE REGIONAL RANCHERS' UNION OF SONORA, HOWEVER, HAS GONE ON RECORD AS STATING THAT MANY OF THESE LANDS ALLEGED TO BE FEDERAL, ARE IN FACT LEGALLY AND PROPERLY HELD IN PRIVATE OWNERSHIP, AND THEY HAVE REQUESTED THAT THE SRA REVIEW ITS INFORMATION ON THE STATUS OF THESE LANDS.

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